# *News From Somewhere*

**by**

**Project Alphistia**

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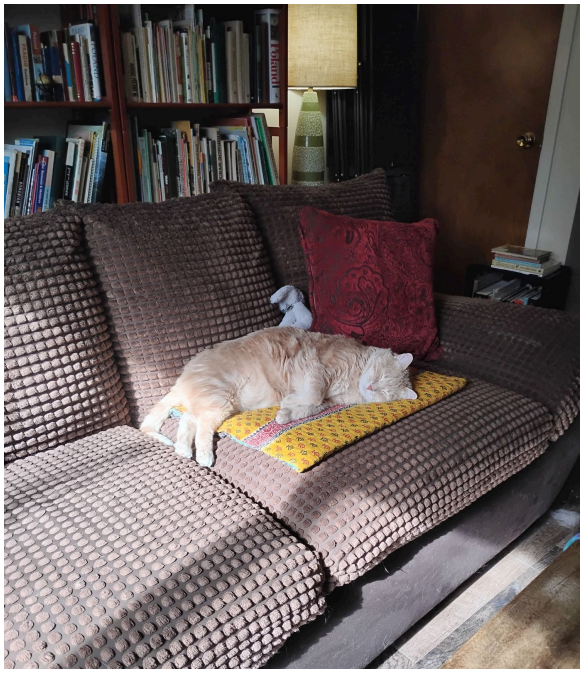
## “Hello from Pushkin”



We had our first frost last night, and Pushkin has moved to higher ground for the winter! After the mostly warm weather during the first three weeks of October, we’re definitely now having much chillier weather. This is causing Pushkin to pile up on the sofa, his easy chair, and most of all, my bed. We have great heat in our little townhouse, and plenty of southern exposure, so Pushkin can enjoy the sun and the comfort of a life he truly deserves. If he were awake, he’d say “Hoiven te al” (hello everybody!)

## Urbana Small Press Fest Was Great!

On Saturday, October 11, I made my way over to Downtown Urbana’s Lincoln Square Mall to set up a temporary Alphistia on half of a 8 foot long table at the Urbana Small Press Fest.

There were more than 60 vendors and LOTS of visitors. My friend Mikelo kept me company most of the time, because I am quite a lot like Bernard Black from the old Britcom “Black Books” (I most highly recommend that show if you’ve never seen it, because it’s hilarious!) In any case, I tend to be shy in public settings, and Mikelo is not, so he called people over to our table and chatted easily with them.

Being Champaign-Urbana in the middle of the Midwest, most people were very polite and friendly. One little creep popped up when I was by myself. He looked like a carbuncle, and stared at me and my pamphlets with great suspicion, and then muttered at me: “So… Where is this place…AL-PIS-FI-A?” I started to reply “Right now, just in my head…” Wrong answer! He waved a dismissive hand at me and snorted as he walked away. I called after him: “Have a nice day - Bless your

heart!" I grew up near the South, so I said the last part with the meaning it most often has in Dixie: "Fuck you!"...

Lots of other people browsed a bit and some had questions. My free stuff flew off the table, Mikelo managed to sell one copy of my latest booklet (Alphistia Small and Beautiful) and several of my $1 items. But there was great consumer resistance to the beautiful books my brother made for me with his publishing company "Roho Press". Alas, even a heavily discounted $10 price was too high for the market to bear. Next time I'll concentrate on $1 and $2 zines…

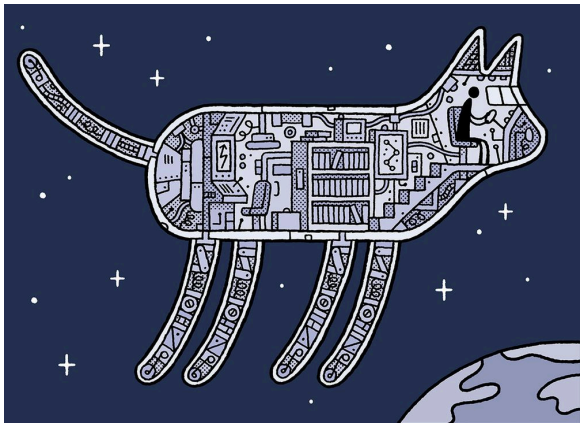
I'm not interested in making any money, I just want people to read my stuff. So a few people went home with gifts from me and a bit of bling.

My dear friends Phil and Jackie came by to say hello, as well as my trusted kitty sitter "Vi". Most of the attendees were from the alternative set locally. After all it takes place in the "People's Republic of Urbana", and there is the local University of Illinois campus with more than 57,000 students.

*(Me and Mikelo vending away!)*

The fest is every two years, and I hope to be back in 2027!

## Interplanetary Space Travel with a Cat



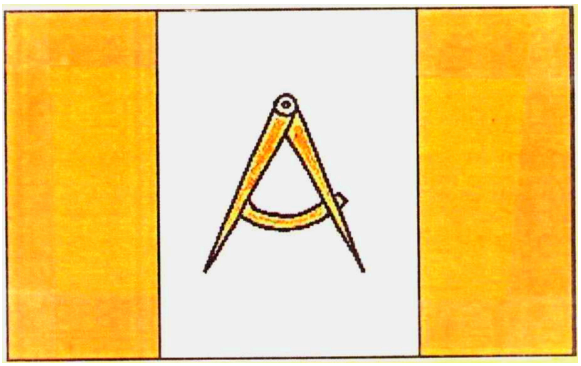
I think it is clear I like cats. I like dogs too but it's easier to live with a kitty. When I finally off-world myself, I will rent or buy a cat spaceship and away I'll go, to one of those peaceful planets that the Starship Enterprise occasionally visits...

I often wish Elon Musk would keep his promise to go to Mars, because he'd expire there within minutes or on the years long trip to get there. And we'd never hear from him again.

This drawing is by Tom Gauld, a great artist who loves books, libraries, and cats. So his spaceship would have plenty of comestibles, books, the interwebs…but I don't see a comfy bed (must be in the back room). In any case I'm sure Tom wouldn't leave out anything important!

I suppose if I decide to stay on this planet, I could ask Tom Gauld to design a suitable "earthship" shaped like a cat. Being such a very practical person, that is probably a better solution for someone like me…

## The Alphistian Flag



Alphistia has an ancient history that goes back to 1967. In 1972, I designed the first Alphistian national flag. I do not currently have an illustration for it, but I can describe it: it was a white flag with three golden interlocking rings, centered. I drew the rings on a piece of white cloth my mom cut from a sheet and sewed up for me. I used magic markers to color the rings, and then up went the flag in our backyard.

The flag looked nice but more than ten feet away, you could not really see the three golden rings. What you saw was just a white nicely sewn quarter sheet blowing in the wind. Yes, it looked like a flag of surrender…

I was very proud of it anyway. Since neighborhood kids on the street where I lived participated in Alphistian fun and games, we marched around with the flag, and I would sing the Alphistian national anthem. And then I wrote a pledge.

This resulted in the “First Alphistian Civil War”. The kids balked. After all, Americans are known for their patriotism and their love for the Stars and Stripes. And then some moms and dads got involved. Two doors down the street was the “province of Bardanste (named after the three kids who lived there Barb, Dan, and Steve). Their parents were typical blue collar: a cigar chomping thuggish dad with a big pick-up truck, and a stay-at-home mom who kept a spic and span house and even ironed her husband’s handkerchiefs.

After I wrote an essay called “Against Flag Worship”, out came my neighbors “Old Glory” on their porch, and Bardanste wasn’t officially talking to me. That lasted for a while until my mom made me apologize and told me not to push things so hard.

So the white Alphistian flag (by now the golden rings were beginning to fade sadly) did really become a surrender.

Where did I get inspired to write my essay? Maoism! In early 1972, Richard Nixon visited the People’s Republic of China and stunned the world. Everyday, long reports on the trip appeared on tv and I gobbled it all up. By springtime I was a big China fan.

China was in the middle of what it called “The Cultural Revolution” a top-down fight against vestiges of the old order, and much more. Many pamphlets and speeches with the titles “Against This or That” appeared in English translations. I’d see the texts in the weekly “Peking Review” that was on the magazine rack at the Cincinnati Public Library.

I certainly wish I’d preserved my document “Against Flag Worship”, but it has not survived.

The Three Golden Rings flag was the official Alphistian flag for the next two decades, but by 1992 Alphistia was no longer on Putnam St. It was on pieces of paper in my apartment in Sunnyside Queens, and I felt it was time for a new flag.

For about a month I doodled some prototypes, and finally settled on a new design. My friend Seth took one look at it and said “You’ve combined the Vatican City flag with the East German flag. Good work!”

He wasn’t wrong! The gold color definitely was inspired by the Vatican flag’s

main color. And I took the compass directly from the flag of the German Democratic Republic (but that's all, not the other colors or symbols).

The compass is a stylized letter "A", and it has often been confused with the Masonic symbol for a compass. I patiently explain that although slightly similar, the Masonic compass is more angular.

Other than as a symbol for the first letter of the country's name, the compass indicates that tool will direct Alphistia's future. And gold is still the country's main color, and features very prominently in this design. So it does not look like a plain white flag anymore from a distance.

A talented Welsh friend created a graphic interpretation of the Compass "A" for me that I am very fond of, and is often used as well as the official version. That is shown here:

I never had a real flag made until two years ago. It flies now and then in my backyard. I found a company online that made them for me at a low price. Fifty-three years after Nixon's China visit, China dominates consumer goods markets around the world, for good or for bad. For me, it meant a decent quality set of two flags shipped to me quickly. Friends of Alphistia are fond of it too, especially since I haven't tried to get them to salute it!

For now, Alphistia is the "Republic of Me" and that is a fine situation. But if the circumstances change the Compass "A" flag is ready as the standard of the Alphistian nation and its people.

Comments welcome at
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